

# **“GO HOME, TERRORIST”**

---

A Report on Bullying Against  
Sikh American School Children

---



# "GO HOME, TERRORIST"

A Report on Bullying Against  
Sikh American School Children

Copyright © 2014 The Sikh Coalition

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

Report design by Suntra.ca

The Sikh Coalition is a community-based organization that works towards the realization of civil and human rights for all people. In particular, we work towards a world where Sikhs may freely practice and enjoy their faith while fostering strong relations with their local community wherever they may be. The Sikh Coalition serves as a resource on Sikhs and Sikh concerns for governments, organizations, and individuals. For more information, please visit our website: <http://www.sikhcoalition.org>.



# CONTENTS



4 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

10 SIKH AMERICANS IN CONTEXT

## FINDINGS

### CALIFORNIA

Background: The Sikh Community In California  
Community Voices And Data

### INDIANA

Background: The Sikh Community In Indiana  
Community Voices And Data

### MASSACHUSETTS

Background: The Sikh Community In Massachusetts  
Community Voices And Data

### WASHINGTON

Background: The Sikh Community In Washington  
Community Voices And Data

32 METHODOLOGY

33 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

34 FOOTNOTES

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"I was in California like seven, six years ago. It was me and my brother - we had *jooras* [uncut hair tied in a topknot]. . . Just us two were Sikh . . . For two years we got bullied, came home crying every day. Mom got tired of it. She went to school. They didn't do anything about it. Teachers were racist out there . . . I was in 5th grade, and my dad took us to a barber shop, and he was like, "It's today." My mom was crying, my dad was crying. It was the day we just [took our *patka*] off, and we cut our hair. We went back to school and we still got bullied. And we had to move out to Indiana, just because of the bullies [in California]. I mean, we got bullies out here too. First, there used to be a couple [of] Indians in high school, but now we got all these Indians . . . and now it is calm because me and [my] brother and all these Indians we have, we just fight it off - that's the only way we got - because the teachers don't do anything, the principal doesn't do anything, so we just fight for it." – L Singh

## B

ullied in California. Bullied in Indiana. Bullied when he maintained his religiously-mandated uncut hair. Bullied after he cut it. Left to his own devices to end it, L. Singh's story captures what we learned from young Sikhs across the country about their experience with school bullying in America.<sup>1</sup>

During 2012 and 2013, we surveyed over 500 Sikh students, conducted focus groups with over 700 students, and interviewed 50 Sikh students in four states: Massachusetts, Indiana, Washington, and California. We found that the majority of Sikh children, just over 50%, endure school bullying. And the numbers are worse for turbaned Sikh children. Over two-thirds, or 67%, reported that they are bullied in school. The word "widespread," particularly as it applies to turbaned Sikh youth, is not an exaggeration. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 32% of all students ages 12 to 18 report that they are bullied in school.

***Turbaned Sikh children therefore experience bullying at more than double the national rate.***

We cannot say we are surprised. In 2008, the Sikh Coalition published a civil rights survey which found that half of all Sikh students and 60% of turbaned Sikh students in New York City experienced bullying.<sup>2</sup> A similar survey report published in 2010 found that 47% of Sikh youth and 69% of turbaned Sikh boys in the San Francisco Bay Area suffer bias-based bullying and harassment.<sup>3</sup>

What we found for this report in Indianapolis, Fresno, Seattle, Boston, and their surrounding metropolitan areas was sadly similar and consistent. Sikh children shared how they are called "Bin Laden" or "terrorist" or told to "Go back to their country." Classmates make fun of their turbans and even try to forcibly remove them.

Clearly, the extraordinary rates of bullying Sikh American school children endure is not happening in a vacuum. The period since 9/11 has been particularly difficult for Sikh Americans and their children. While Sikh children experience bullying in the classrooms, their Sikh American parents endure astoundingly high rates of hate crimes, employment discrimination, and scrutiny at the nation's airports. Brown skin and turbans have popularly become associated with terror. Crude popular culture stereotypes of terrorists<sup>4</sup> and damaging media images outside the classroom have made their way into the classroom to the detriment of young Sikhs.

Our government, teachers, and school administrators, however, are not powerless to stop Sikh children from being bullied. The United States Congress should prioritize passage of the Safe Schools Improvement Act. The Act would require that schools enact anti-bullying policies and collect data on



school bullying for diagnostic purposes. It is also critical that such data collection specifically include data on the rates at which Sikh children are bullied. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) recently agreed to specifically track "anti-Sikh" hate crimes. The Department of Education should similarly track whether Sikh students are bullied and harassed based on their religion. In the absence of official data, small under-resourced community-based organizations like the Sikh Coalition shoulder the unfair burden of collecting data on bullying and harassment.

Data collection and policies prohibiting school bullying are not enough. Young people should learn about Sikhs in school and Sikh American contributions to this country. Sikhism is the world's fifth largest faith tradition. Sikhs have lived in America for more than 100 years, helped build the transcontinental railroad, stood at the forefront of civil rights struggles, and were heroic first-responders on 9/11. Recognizing the value of students learning about Sikh Americans, state boards of education in Texas<sup>5</sup> and New Jersey<sup>6</sup> now require that social studies and geography curricula include information on Sikhs. Other state boards of education should follow suit.

Textbook manufacturers have a role to play as well. According to Sikh Coalition research, major school textbook manufacturers in the United States—including Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Pearson, and McGraw-Hill—have pub-

lished information on Sikhs that is inaccurate and inflammatory.<sup>7</sup> This inaccurate information includes conflating Sikhism with other religious traditions and extraneous references to "Sikh terrorists." This is often the only exposure that American students have to Sikhs. Textbook manufacturers should hold themselves to a higher standard of academic integrity and publish only accurate and relevant information about Sikhs, Sikh beliefs, and Sikh contributions to world and U.S. history.

Official government discrimination that treats Sikhs as different must come to an end as well. Devout Sikhs are presently excluded from United States military service and Sikhs report unusually high rates of secondary screening at airports in America. Government practices that exclude Sikhs from service or subject them to undue scrutiny sends the wrong message to both adults and children.

Over time, teachers, administrators, textbook manufacturers, legislators, and the media all have a significant role to play in not only creating a safe space to learn at school for Sikhs, but for all children. Until intentional action is taken to end the horrible dynamic described in this report, we fully expect that five and ten and fifteen years from now, Sikh children will still be acutely susceptible to school bullying. It is our hope that the stories and data contained here will compel all to take action to end the bias-based bullying of Sikh school children now.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

This is the Sikh Coalition's fifth report exclusively on school bullying and harassment in as many years. The following recommendations are based on our accumulated experience as researchers, advocates, and litigators on this issue.

## Congress should pass the Safe Schools Improvement Act.

This bipartisan legislation<sup>8</sup> would require schools and school districts to collect and report data on bullying and harassment. Such data would improve diagnostic and deterrence efforts and create incentives for school officials to prevent bullying and harassment from occurring. In the absence of official data, small under-resourced community-based organizations like the Sikh Coalition shoulder the burden of collecting data on bullying and harassment and holding schools accountable.

## Congress should amend Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to add religion as a protected class so that the Department of Education can hold schools accountable for failing to prevent bullying and harassment on this basis.

Sikh students are often targeted for bullying, harassment, and violence because of their religion. While Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 empowers the U.S. Department of Education to address school bullying based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability, religion is conspicuously missing from this list.<sup>9</sup> Religion is a protected category under federal employment discrimination<sup>10</sup> and hate crime prevention laws. It should also be afforded protection in the context of bullying prevention<sup>11</sup> as well.

## The Department of Education should track and monitor bias-based bullying against Sikh children.

While the federal government presently collects limited data on school bullying, including the race of victims<sup>12</sup>, it does not collect data on a victim's religion. As described in this report, Sikh children are particularly vulnerable to school bullying and harassment because of their religion. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) recently agreed to specifically track "anti-Sikh" hate crimes. The Department of Education should similarly track whether students are bullied and harassed based on their religion, including whether children are bullied on account of their Sikh religious practice.

## State boards of education should require that accurate information on Sikhs and Sikh Americans be included in school curricula, and that information on the bullying of Sikh children be a part of curricula and materials on the subject of school bullying.

The Sikh religion is the world's fifth largest religion with over 25 million adherents throughout the world. Sikhs have lived in the United States for over a century and made lasting contributions in the fields of agri-

culture, science, and civil rights. Nevertheless, Sikhs are neither adequately nor accurately represented in school curricula, producing ignorance of the sort that can translate into bullying. Recognizing the need for students to learn about Sikh Americans, state boards of education in Texas<sup>13</sup> and New Jersey<sup>14</sup> require that information on Sikhs is included in social studies and geography curricula. Other state boards of education should follow suit.

## Include accurate and complete information on Sikhs in textbooks.

According to Sikh Coalition research, major school textbook manufacturers in the United States—including Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Pearson, and McGraw-Hill—have published information on Sikhs that is inaccurate and inflammatory.<sup>15</sup> This inaccurate information includes conflating Sikhism with other religious traditions and extraneous references to "Sikh terrorists". This is often the only exposure that American students have to Sikhs and can perpetuate ignorance and produce negative stereotypes that lead to bullying. Textbook manufacturers should hold themselves to a higher standard of academic integrity and publish only accurate and relevant information about Sikhs, Sikh beliefs, and Sikh contributions to world and U.S. history.



## For Teachers and School Administrators

Teachers should share presentations, lesson plans, books, and videos on Sikhs with students.

School bullying is the most frequently cited civil rights concern among Sikh American children and parents.<sup>16</sup> In response, the Sikh Coalition and other community organizations have created numerous age-appropriate educational resources for educators and students to demystify Sikhs and reduce school bullying and harassment. A list of free resources recommended by the Sikh Coalition can be found at: <http://www.sikhcoalition.org/resources/educational-materials>.

**Teachers and administrators should involve students directly in bullying prevention efforts.**

We have consistently found that schools that do not actively engage students in anti-bullying efforts are more likely to experience problems with bullying.<sup>17</sup> Teachers and administrators may actively engage students in bullying prevention by: (a) organizing classroom discussions and group work to promote respect for diversity; (b) creating classroom activities, such as anti-bullying essay contests, art and poetry contests, and critical thinking exercises; (c) teaching students to identify bullying and harassment and practice intervention techniques through role play exercises; (d) encouraging students to speak out against bullying and harassment that they have witnessed; and (e) scheduling regular meetings and school assemblies to discuss school policies, concerns, and feedback regarding anti-bullying policies and procedures.<sup>18</sup>

**Teachers and administrators should involve parents in bullying prevention efforts.**

As documented in this report, Sikh children are often subjected to epithets like “terrorists” and “Bin Laden”. These crude and demeaning slurs originate outside the educational environment. Parents should be made aware of school prohibitions on school bullying and harassment, including name-calling, through school newsletters and other written and electronic communications to parents.

**Administrators should collect data on school bullying and harassment in order to understand where, when, and how students experience bullying and harassment, and ascertain whether adults respond to reported incidents.**

Data collection is crucial to understanding a school’s climate and gauging the effectiveness of bullying prevention and intervention efforts. Collection of such data can be achieved by drawing on well-framed student and teacher surveys and student discipline records.<sup>19</sup> Where there are significant Sikh populations, schools should collect data about anti-Sikh bullying and harassment.

**Administrators and teachers should implement bullying assessment and prevention measures and policies during early school years rather than waiting until middle school or high school to do so.**

Consistent with other communities, Sikh students endure the most school bullying during middle school and early high school. It is critical therefore that work to create a school culture free of school bullying begin at the inception of a child’s education.

**All school staff should be trained on school bullying and harassment prohibitions.**

We have too often found over the past decade that teachers and other school staff who witness bullying take little or ineffective action to address school bullying. All teachers and support staff should be trained on school bullying and harassment prohibitions, how to identify these problems, and appropriate methods of intervention.

**Ensure bullying and harassment does not occur on the school bus.**

Numerous Sikh students have reported to us that the school bus is the primary place where they are bullied or harassed. Educators and administrators should ensure school buses are safe and harassment free for all students.



# SIKH AMERICANS IN CONTEXT

## About Sikhs

The Sikh religion is the fifth largest world religion with approximately 25 million adherents throughout the world and an estimated 500,000 followers in the United States. Sikhs have lived in the United States for more than a century. Sikhism originated in the Punjab region of South Asia, where the religion was founded over 500 years ago.

The Sikh religion is a strongly monotheistic tradition that believes there is one God who loves, sustains, and embraces all. Sikhs believe that God is in all beings and are taught to treat their fellow human beings with love and as equals, regardless of their gender, religion, caste, race, or national origin. Sikhs are taught to live by three principles: earn an honest living, share your bounty with those in need, and remember the Creator at all times.

Initiated Sikhs (and many who are not yet initiated) maintain an external uniform to remind them of their commitment to Sikh principles at all times. This uniform consists of the five articles of faith. They are: 1) *Kesh* (uncut hair), 2) the *Kirpan* (religious sword), 3) *Kara* (metal bracelet), 4) *Kanga* (comb) and 5) *Kachera* (under-shorts). In addition to these five articles of faith, Sikh men (it is optional for women) are religiously-mandated to wear dastaars (Sikh turbans) over their unshorn hair. When a Sikh maintains these articles of faith, it is a public demonstration of their inner commitment to their Sikh beliefs.

### SIKH ARTICLES OF FAITH



**KANGA**  
a comb



**KIRPAN**  
a sword



**KACHERA**  
a slightly longer type of  
underpants



**KARA**  
a steel or iron bracelet



**KESH**  
unshorn, uncut hair



Men must and women  
may wear turbans, the  
traditional head covering  
for Sikhs' uncut hair

## Sikhs in America

While the turban signifies all that is loving, brave, and honest to a Sikh, in the United States it has often attracted unwanted and negative attention. Though Sikh laborers began historic work on the Western Pacific Railway as early as 1905,<sup>20</sup> early Sikh American history is marked by the Bellingham riots of 1907 during which angry mobs beat and chased Sikh workers to the city limits in Bellingham, Washington.<sup>21</sup> Early Sikh immigrants endured the loss of their land after passage of California's Alien Land Act of 1913 which prohibited non-citizens from owning land.<sup>22</sup> Early Sikh settlers won and then lost the right to citizenship in the landmark United States Supreme Court case, *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, which held in 1923 that immigrants from India would not qualify for United States citizenship.<sup>23</sup>

Yet Sikhs kept struggling for their rights and contributing to the welfare of America. In 1953, Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany invented fiber optics as a means of transmitting information.<sup>24</sup> In 1956, Dalip Singh Saund became the first Sikh, South Asian, and Asian American Member of the United States Congress, representing California's Imperial Valley.<sup>25</sup> He promptly became a staunch advocate for the passage of landmark civil rights legislation, supporting the struggle led by the African-American community for equal protection under the law.

The Sikh American tapestry shifted significantly after 1965 when U.S. immigration laws reversed course and began allowing educated Asians, including Sikhs from South Asia, to come to the United States.<sup>26</sup> Though Sikhs faced discrimination, particularly during times of heightened tension in the Middle East,<sup>27</sup> Sikh Americans settled in mostly normal patterns of immigrant settlement in the U.S.

## Discrimination Post 9/11

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 led to an exponential increase in hate crimes, employment discrimination, law enforcement profiling, and school bullying against Sikhs in the United States. The Sikh Coalition was born in the wake of 9/11 to fight discrimination against Sikh Americans.<sup>28</sup> It is now the largest Sikh American civil rights organization.

Sikh Americans remain acutely susceptible to hate crimes. A survey of Sikh Americans published in 2006 by Harvard University revealed that 83 percent of Sikh respondents either personally experienced or knew someone who experienced a hate crime or hate incident on account of their religion.<sup>29</sup> A grassroots survey report of Sikhs in New York City published by the Sikh Coalition in 2008 revealed that nine percent of respondents had experienced physical assaults on account of their religion.<sup>30</sup> A similar survey in the San Francisco Bay Area revealed that ten percent of respondents had experienced bias-based assaults or property damage on account of their religion.<sup>31</sup> In the last three years alone, two elderly Sikhs were murdered in Elk Grove, California<sup>32</sup>; a Sikh cab driver was assaulted in Sacramento, California<sup>33</sup>; a Sikh transit worker was assaulted in New York City<sup>34</sup>; a Sikh cab driver was assaulted in Seattle, Washington<sup>35</sup>; a Sikh business owner was shot and injured in Port Orange, Florida<sup>36</sup>; a Sikh grandfather was beaten with a steel rod in Fresno, California<sup>37</sup>; a Sikh physician was assaulted in New York City<sup>38</sup>; and six Wisconsin Sikhs were murdered and several more injured at the Oak Creek Gurdwara (Sikh house of worship) by a gunman with known ties to hate groups in one of the worst attacks on an American place of worship since the 1963 bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama.<sup>39</sup>

According to Sikh Coalition community surveys, nine percent of Sikhs in New York City<sup>40</sup> and 12 percent of Sikhs in the San Francisco Bay Area<sup>41</sup> believe they have experienced bias-based discrimination in the workplace. Over the past few years, the Sikh Coalition and federal government have fought battles to address the firing of a Sikh for wearing a turban at an AutoZone franchise,<sup>42</sup> the right of a Sikh to grow a beard and sell cars at a Lexus dealership,<sup>43</sup> and the right of Sikhs to work for the New York City Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) in public view without having to brand their turbans with the MTA corporate logo as a purported post-9/11 “safety” measure.<sup>44</sup>

Sikh Americans have also reported concerns about profiling by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). At many airports around the United States, turbaned Sikhs report a 100% rate of secondary screening, even after passing through body scanners without incident.<sup>45</sup>

## School Bullying and Sikh Children

The issue of school bullying is the most frequently cited civil rights concern of Sikh American children and parents.<sup>46</sup>

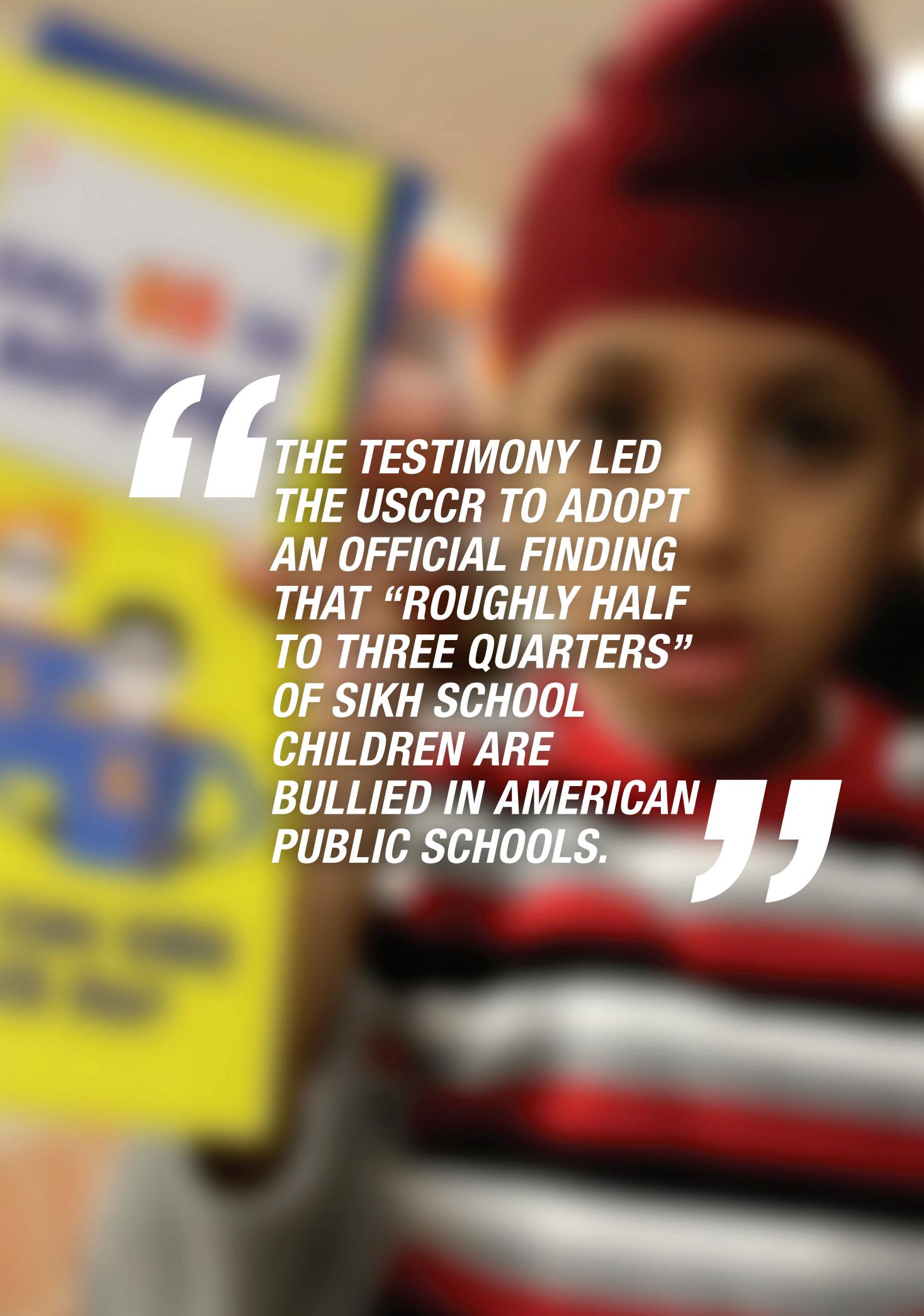
In 2008, the Sikh Coalition published a civil rights survey report of New York City Sikhs. The findings revealed that of over 400 Sikh children surveyed, 62% of turban-wearing Sikh students in Queens, New York experienced bullying, and that 42% of them had been hit or involuntarily touched because of their turbans.<sup>47</sup> A similar survey report published in 2010 found that 69% of turbaned Sikh boys in the San Francisco Bay Area suffer bias-based bullying and harassment.<sup>48</sup>

In recent years, there have been a number of high-profile, violent school attacks on Sikh American school children. In May 2007, a student wrestled down a Sikh boy at a New York City public school, forcibly cut his hair, which Sikhs are religiously required to maintain uncut, and flushed it down a toilet.<sup>49</sup> The next year, again in New York City, a student attempted to remove a Sikh boy’s turban and, in the process, punched him

in the face, fracturing his orbital bone.<sup>50</sup> The next week, a portion of a Sikh girl’s uncut hair was intentionally cut by a fellow student.<sup>51</sup> In New Jersey, a Sikh boy’s turban was set on fire by another student.<sup>52</sup> In 2013, a school district in DeKalb County, Georgia entered into a consent decree with the United States Department of Justice because it failed over the course of a year to protect a Sikh student from continuous verbal harassment and physical violence.<sup>53</sup>

The high rates of bullying Sikh children endure and community efforts to combat it have slowly begun to put Sikhs in a position of local and national leadership on the issue. In New York City, the Sikh Coalition is often cited as the lead organization in the successful fight for the creation of a School Chancellor’s Regulation for preventing and addressing bias-based bullying in New York City’s public schools.<sup>54</sup>

Sikhs are now part of national efforts to combat school bullying. In 2011, the Sikh Coalition testified before the United States Commission on Civil Rights (USCCR) about bias-based bullying and harassment against Sikh American students.<sup>55</sup> The testimony led the USCCR to adopt an official finding that “roughly half to three quarters” of Sikh school children are bullied in American public schools.<sup>56</sup> Sikh students and advocates are regularly invited to federal government conferences to discuss strategies for addressing the issue.<sup>57</sup> In 2013, a Wall Street Journal blog discussed the work of the Junior Sikh Coalition, a community youth empowerment group, to encourage Sikh youth to find constructive ways to end bullying and harassment in their schools.<sup>58</sup>



“ THE TESTIMONY LED THE USCCR TO ADOPT AN OFFICIAL FINDING THAT “ROUGHLY HALF TO THREE QUARTERS” OF SIKH SCHOOL CHILDREN ARE BULLIED IN AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS. ”



# FINDINGS

This section details the results of our surveys and interviews in Fresno, California; Indianapolis, Indiana; Boston, Massachusetts; and Seattle, Washington.

## Fresno, California

*"I was walking home from school and a group of kids came up to me and they started asking me what was on my head . . . they started picking up rocks from in front of someone's house while I was walking home, and threw them at me. One actually hit my head and I had a bump on my head for like two weeks after that. My dad did go to school and talk to the principal. The person got suspended for like two, three days, but right after that, he just started doing to [the] same thing again..."*

G Singh

## 5 POINTS

### HIGHLIGHTING SCHOOL BULLYING



- 67% of turbaned Sikh youth have experienced bullying and harassment
- 54% of Sikh youth have experienced bullying or harassment
- 51% of Sikh youth believe school officials do not respond adequately to bullying incidents
- 21% of Sikh youth have been bullied or harassed at least once a week
- 13% face bullying almost daily

### Background: The Sikh Community in Fresno

California is home to a large and influential Sikh population, estimated at 250,000.<sup>59</sup> Recognizing over a century of Sikh contributions to the welfare of the state, the California legislature designated November 2012 and 2013 as Sikh American Awareness and Appreciation Month.<sup>60</sup>

For over a century, California Sikhs have spearheaded important milestones in Sikh American history. The first Gurdwara (Sikh house of worship) in North America was inaugurated in Stockton, California in 1912.<sup>61</sup> The first Asian American ever to serve in the U.S. Congress was Dalip Singh Saund, a Sikh, who was elected from California in 1956.<sup>62</sup> In 2012, responding to persistent reports of job discrimination, the California Sikh community, in partnership with the Sikh Coalition, successfully lobbied for the passage of the Workplace Religious Freedom Act (AB1964), which provides Californians the nation's strongest protections against religious discrimination.<sup>63</sup>

Despite these achievements, challenges remain. A 2010 survey of Sikhs in the San Francisco Bay Area published by the Sikh Coalition revealed that up to 10 percent of respondents had experienced bias-based assaults or property damage on account of their religion.<sup>64</sup> Since then, two elderly Sikhs were murdered in Elk Grove, California,<sup>65</sup> a Sikh cab driver was assaulted in Sacramento, California,<sup>66</sup> and an elderly Sikh man in Fresno suffered a vicious beating with a steel pipe.<sup>67</sup> At San Francisco International Airport, Sikh travelers complained of unfair public searches, suggestive of screening discrimination.<sup>68</sup> The same survey revealed that 74% of turbaned Sikh students in the San Francisco Bay Area experience bullying and harassment.<sup>69</sup>

Fresno, situated in the California's Central Valley, is home to thousands of Sikh Americans, many of whom work in the agriculture and trucking industries. Along with the San Francisco Bay Area, California's Central Valley has one of the largest concentrations of Sikhs anywhere in the United States.

**"THEY STARTED PICKING UP ROCKS FROM IN FRONT OF SOMEONE'S HOUSE WHILE I WAS WALKING HOME, AND THREW THEM AT ME..."**

### Community Voices and Data

On June 29th and 30th, 2012, we conducted two bullying forums in Fresno, California. The forums included surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews at the Gurdwara in Selma and Gurdwara Nanak Prakash in Fresno. Over 250 children participated in the focus groups, over 180 surveys were completed, and ten individual one-on-one interviews were conducted.

After our first focus group, it was evident that students in Fresno suffer some of the worst bullying of the children we surveyed around the country. The overall rate of bullying of Sikh children in Fresno was the second highest percentage of bullying, 54.5%, following Indianapolis.

The data from the surveys provide much insight into what Sikh students in Fresno believe prompted others to bully them. Identity was one of the major factors for Sikh children who were being bullied in Fresno. Of those who wear turbans and maintain uncut hair in accordance with their religious beliefs, 67% of students (both boys and girls) experienced bullying. During the focus groups and interviews, many students mentioned having their turbans or patkas (a smaller Sikh head covering worn by boys) ripped off their heads. Other religious articles were also targeted; for example, devout Sikhs wear a kara (steel or iron bracelet). We learned of multiple incidents where the kara was forcibly pulled off a student's wrist and then thrown in the trash.

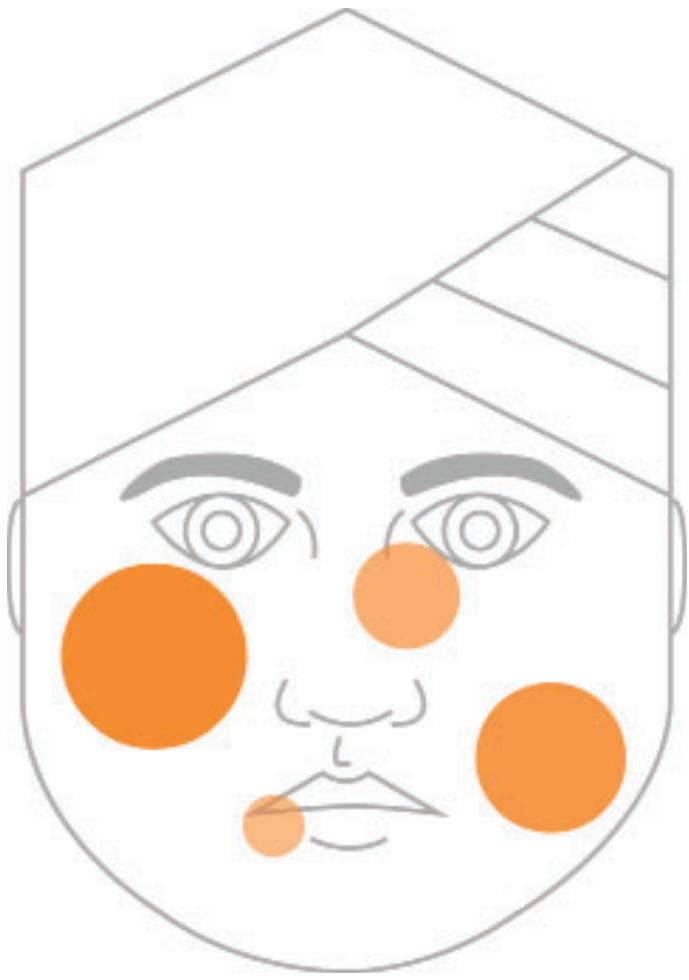
*"I've seen a lot of bullying and I've been a bullying victim before... A kid... pulled off my hair, and when I went home, my mom saw the hair. She took the hair and wrapped it up. The next day, she went to the principal and told him that [the kid] pulled off my hair. Then that kid was suspended for like two days only. When he came back, he started to throw wood chips at me on the playground, and when I went home, my mom saw a lot of wood chips on my hair... In 3rd grade, he started to make fun of my kesh (long uncut hair). He started to say, "Is that a tomato on your head? Could I cut it?" When I went home, I told my mom. She went to the office and told the principal and [the bully] got suspended...And one day, when I [was outside] playing with my friends, he came to me and smacked me in the face and I had a black eye."*

The Sikh students in Fresno believe they are bullied for a variety of reasons: their religious articles, religion, race, national origin, and even accusations that they are associated with terrorists. 63% of those bullied believed they were bullied on the basis of religion or ethnicity, and almost 27% believed it was because other students thought they looked like terrorists.

In all the states we visited, Sikh children are commonly labeled as "terrorists" by their peers. According to the youth we surveyed, they are questioned about whether they are hiding a grenade or gun under their head coverings. When a prominent Al Qaeda member was killed, one student was asked, "How do you feel now that your uncle was killed?"

It is common to associate physical violence with boys, but our focus groups and interviews revealed that girls are also subjected to violence initiated by other girls. According to C Kaur, "Certain days at school, when I'm running or whatever, these . . . girls came out of nowhere and just pushed me down and I really got hurt, just physically and emotionally."

Punitive measures employed by teachers are often not effective solutions.<sup>70</sup> According to some of the students we surveyed, when a bully is suspended, he or she channels their anger towards the victim, and more severe incidents occur in the future. For example I Singh told us:



#### HOW OFTEN DO YOU FACE BULLYING?

47%	<i>Rarely, once or twice</i>
33%	<i>Randomly, a few times</i>
13%	<i>Regularly, almost daily</i>
8%	<i>Often, about once a week</i>

Students cannot stand up to bullying alone. Students indicated that it was the lack of responsiveness from teachers that often leads to underreporting of these incidents in their schools. When the students we surveyed in Fresno were asked about whether the school had taken any action after they reported bullying, 51% stated that nothing was done. This was the highest percentage out of the four states we visited.

The lack of responsiveness by teachers and ineffective deterrent mechanisms leads to persistent bullying and harassment against Sikh students. Of those who said they were bullied in school, 8% said that they are bullied once a week, and 13% said they endure bullying almost daily.

What is striking about this data is that Fresno is a richly diverse community. Sikhs have a high degree of influence and prominence as farmers and entrepreneurs, as well as a large population, in the Central Valley, with roots in the community going back over 100 years. Even still, during our focus groups, many of the students discussed tensions between Sikh and Latino students in Fresno. Many of the epithets used against Sikh youth in Fresno today are identical to those used against Sikhs more than 100 years ago. For example, numerous Sikh students have been called "Hindoo," which was a term in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century used to identify someone from India. To address these problems, the youth we surveyed suggested more multicultural education to foster appreciation and respect among different ethnic and religious groups.

One student who had been the victim of physical and verbal violence expressed his frustration about the lack of recognition of different groups and identities:

"I think the biggest problem about these people is they're too ignorant to understand the difference[s] between Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism ... Where I was growing up [before], there was a big Sikh community, but people still didn't understand. Even though ... probably like 15 - 20% of the people that went to my school were Indian, Punjabi, Sikh ... bullying still happened and people didn't stop."

The students also felt that greater awareness can be created about the issue of bullying and suggested creative ways of achieving this goal. D Kaur suggested:

"We should have [First Lady] Michelle Obama bring this awareness about bullying on TV, to the media because we know that the media has a great influence, not only on the young or the old, but on everyone. And then, community-wise I think that every school does have anti-bullying programs or assemblies, but that's only for these students and the administrators, but we should also involve the parents into these assemblies. So that way, the parents know what's going on at their child's school and what they can do to stop [bullying]."

It is clear from our visit to Fresno that a majority of Sikh youth we surveyed there endure school bullying and that turbaned Sikh youth are particularly vulnerable. There is a general feeling that teachers and administrators have not prioritized addressing these issues as they apply to Sikh youth. The students we interviewed believe that education on Sikhs and Sikh practices, in particular, would improve their school climate.



## Indianapolis, Indiana

*"[In school], I see people getting pushed, shoved, kicked, teased. Everything is very like, violent, and a lot of people just keep on making fun of each other."*

K Singh

## 4 POINTS

### HIGHLIGHTING SCHOOL BULLYING



- **86%** of Sikh youth believe schools should educate fellow students about the Sikh community in order to help prevent bullying
- **56%** of Sikh youth have experienced bullying or harassment
- **43%** of Sikh youth believe school officials do not respond adequately to bullying incidents
- **25%** of Sikh youth have been bullied or harassed at least once a week

### Background: The Sikh Community in Indiana

Although Sikhs began settling in Indiana more than 40 years ago, the community established its first Gurdwara (Sikh house of worship) in 1999. In the last two decades, the Sikh population around Indianapolis has experienced significant growth, driven in part by migration from California. The town of Greenwood, in particular, is home to a large population of Sikh families.

Members of the small but vibrant Indianapolis Sikh community actively promote civic engagement. In recent years, community members have participated in an interfaith gathering to support poverty relief<sup>71</sup>; hosted the state governor at a Gurdwara<sup>72</sup>; and even represented Indianapolis in a public relations campaign in connection with Super Bowl XLVI.<sup>73</sup> Some community members have also taken steps to protect their civil rights. In 2009, a member of the community made headlines by filing an employment discrimination law-suit against an airport shuttle bus company that denied him a job because of his religion.<sup>74</sup>

### Community Voices and Data

On June 9th and June 10th of 2012, we conducted two bullying prevention forums at Gurdwara Sikh Satsang of Indianapolis and Gurdwara Sri Hargobind Sahib Ji of Greenwood. Over 200 children participated in the focus groups, approximately 140 surveys were completed, and over 25 one-on-one interviews were conducted.

Indiana had the highest rate of bullying of Sikh children of the four states we surveyed, with students facing bullying at a rate of 55.8%. Even more startling is that almost a quarter of those bullied reported being bullied at least once a week. The individual stories also expressed some of the most extreme forms of bullying we heard about during our research. Bullying on the basis of religion and race were most prevalent, with the survey indicating that 48% of the Sikh students believed they were bullied based on their religion or ethnicity, and 43.7% based on their race.

Many of the children we interviewed came to Indiana from California and experienced bullying in both states. With minimal substantive programs to address bullying, some youth, including L Singh, are left to fend for themselves. According to L Singh:

*"I was in California like 7, 6 years ago. It was me and my brother - we had jooras [uncut hair tied in a top-knot]. And we were the only Indians in school. Everyone else was Mexican and Black Americans. Just us two were Sikh ... For two years we got bullied, came home crying every day. Mom got tired of it. She went to school. They didn't do anything about it. Teachers were racist out there ... I was in 5th grade, and my dad took us to a barber shop, and he was like, "It's today." My mom was crying, my dad was crying. It was the day we just got it off, and we cut our hair. We went back to school and we still got bullied. And we had to move out to Indiana, just because of the bullies out there. I mean, we got bullies out here too. First, there used to be a couple Indians in high school, but now we got all these Indians ... and now its calm because me and brother and all these Indians we have, we just fight it off - that's the only way we got - because the teachers don't do anything, the principal doesn't do anything, so we just fight for it."*



Though we tried to emphasize that engaging in sports is often an effective way to prevent bullying and harassment, students who played football and other sports noted that they still experience bullying and harassment. According to M Singh:

"I'm a football player ... in high school and we were out to play football at a different place. I had some racial slurs [said] to me and some of my friends because of our color and our race. Some of the names [we were] called were 'sand nigger' and 'nigger.'"

N Singh, another football player shared:

"So the crowd decided to hold up signs, they'd call me names, such as "terrorist." You know, you hear stuff like that all the time. But in my case, I've grown up in the same town now for seventeen years and it really helped when I had my whole coaching staff [and] whole township, [by] my side."

Many of the students expressed a concern that a large part of why they face bullying is because of a lack of awareness and education; 86% of students expressed the importance of having education about Sikhs in their schools. G Kaur shared:

"[Growing up], we [often walked] home from a bus stop. We lived in front of a park, and everyone knew who we were. My dad wears an orange *dastaar* (Sikh turban), and once while coming home ... a little girl asked [me and my sister], "Why does your dad always wear orange toilet paper on his head?" And it might be funny sometimes to just laugh it off... but if we don't spread awareness, it's going to continue on ..."

Some students shared moving stories about how teachers had intervened to explain who Sikhs are, helping to stop the cycle of bias-based bullying incidents. Q Singh stated:

"When I moved to America ... it was just like [they] looked at [us] and called us names like "terrorist" and stuff like that or "go back to your country" ... I started school in 2nd grade, and that's [when] it started. As the years went on, the bullies started getting worse. Back in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, I used to be bullied and I remember I told my mom and my mom gave me this book. I got it from my Punjabi school ... that book talked about the 5 K's, what Sikhi is and everything. I gave that to one of my teachers. He got the whole school together and actually read that book out loud to the whole school. That prevented [bullying] for the four years I went to that school and then I moved cities."

Students were very interested in working to resolve bullying in their schools, and discussed solutions to combat bullying. When asked what teachers and administrators could do about bullying, I Kaur suggested:

"Talk to parents, give a lesson about Sikhism ... and have a discussion or activities about bullying."

Some students even shared solutions being implemented at their schools. For example, one high-school student discussed a new program at her school meant to address bullying against disabled students. L Kaur stated:

"Our school started this thing called the 'R word project' where we take a pledge ... that we'll never say ['retard'] again ... And also what we have [are] these bracelets that say 'Spread the word to end the word.' And this means stop saying the 'R' word because it may not hurt us, but it hurts other people."

A major issue that arose often in interviews with the students was a concern about lack of participation of their parents in addressing bullying incidents. Some students indicated that their parents may not fully understand the effects that bullying has on a student's well-being. Some children also expressed that their parents were unable to talk with teachers because of language barriers, and hence, feared approaching the administration. We found that only 44% of bullied students reported telling their parents about being bullied.

Some students have developed an indifference to bullying because of the constant barrage of racist jokes, especially when they originate from their own friends. M Kaur stated:

"Bullying is a problem but some people don't take it seriously, like me... This kid, last year at our lunch table, he used to go ... "Oh, I don't want to make fun of this girl because she's Indian and she might blow me up." ... and on Facebook one of my friends is always like "Oh, are you gonna blow me up or something because I'm being mean to you" and I don't take it seriously, but ... you don't realize it's bullying."

Other students were not hopeful that anything would change. According to X Singh:

"I get bullied in school and in other places too, but in school the most because people start [twisting] my joora (uncut hair tied in a topknot), and I get really mad, but my teacher doesn't care, because he's pretty mean to me. He doesn't care, but I tell the principal, and the principal actually takes the kids that [twist] my joora and...says [to them] 'if you do it one more time, you guys are going to get suspended'... Then in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, I bet people are going to do that again to me, and probably when I'm in football, people are going to start making fun of my ... kesh (long uncut hair)."

The students of Indiana made it very clear that bullying is a serious problem for Sikh students. There are limited diversity education and bullying prevention programs, and existing legislation and policies are doing little to end bullying of Sikh students. Teachers, administrators, and parents need to take immediate action to address these issues, or they will continue to fester.

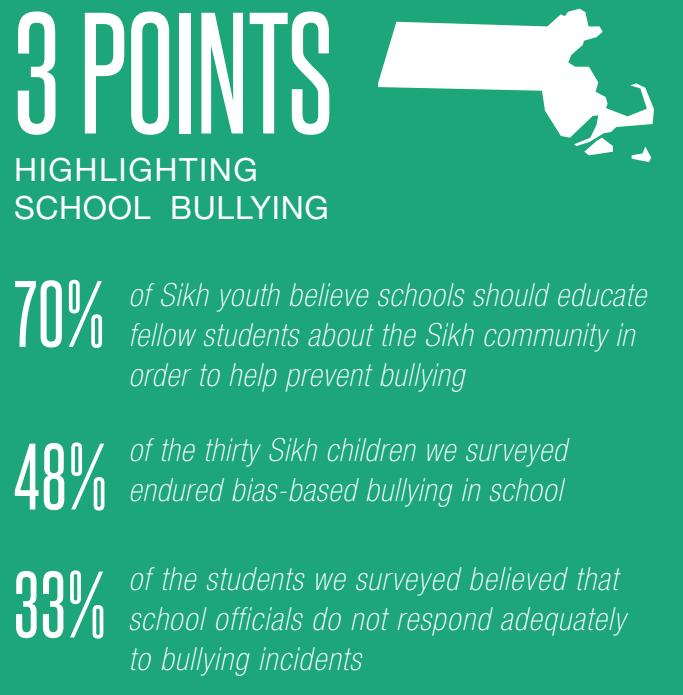




## Boston, Massachusetts

*"The first time, when I was in the bathroom, people started calling me names like tennis ball head and all that stuff, and in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, people started hitting my joora [uncut hair tied in a top knot] ... First, I told my mom, and she said to tell my teacher, and I told my teacher. She told the principal but the principal didn't do anything about it, so I told my mom and then my mom came and asked my teacher about it ... Some people still do it, but when I'm around my friends, they still help me ..."*

Y Singh



### Background: The Sikh Community in Massachusetts

Even though Professor Teja Singh, a famous Sikh activist and teacher obtained his degree from Harvard University in Massachusetts in 1911,<sup>75</sup> the Sikh population only began to grow in Massachusetts after the 1960s. Today, there are approximately 200 families and four Gurdwaras (Sikh house of worship) in the Boston area with the first being established in Milford, Massachusetts in 1990. Sikhs in Boston pursue diverse occupations, with many working as engineers, doctors, academics, and entrepreneurs. In March 2012, a Sikh Coalition client successfully settled a high-profile employment discrimination lawsuit against a Boston-area AutoZone store, which discriminated against him because of his religion.<sup>76</sup>

### Community Voices and Data

On June 3, 2012, we conducted a bullying prevention forum at the Milford Gurdwara. Approximately 50 students participated in the focus groups, just under 30 surveys were completed, and eight one-on-one interviews were conducted. While this sample size is relatively small compared to the other cities we visited, it is important to note that the rates of school bullying reported by Sikh students in the Boston metropolitan area is consistent with reported rates of bullying around the country. In addition, there are relatively few Sikhs in the Boston metropolitan area compared to other parts of the country.

Sikh students in Boston generally reported less physical bullying than students in other states but experienced high levels of verbal harassment. Students in focus groups revealed dissatisfaction with the inability or unwillingness of teachers and administrators to address the problem of bullying. According to AA Singh:

**"I HAD JUST MOVED TO BOSTON AND I WAS BULLIED BECAUSE I WAS INDIAN AND I WAS DIFFERENT FROM ALL THE PEOPLE, BECAUSE THERE [WERE] NO INDIANS IN THAT SCHOOL AT ALL AND I HAD A HEAVY INDIAN ACCENT, AND THE WAY I LOOKED. I WAS VERBALLY ABUSED, I WAS CALLED NAMES, AND I WOULD REPORT IT TO TEACHERS, AND THEY BARELY TOOK ANY ACTION - THEY JUST ASKED THEM TO STOP ONCE OR TWICE."**



AC Singh added:

"I was called mean names, I've been called names because of my *patka* (smaller turban worn by younger Sikh children). They would say "ball head" and they would touch my *joora* [uncut hair tied in a top knot] sometimes, and that kind of stuff. I tried to ignore it... I didn't really say anything about the bullying because if I did, I'd be called a tattle-tale, a snitch, or those kinds of names."

The surveys further revealed that 33% of the students who reported being bullied to their teachers or school staff believe nothing was done to address the problem. Many bullying incidents go unreported. Only 57% of children who faced bullying told a teacher or school staff about the incident, and just under half told their parents.

In one of the focus groups, both boys and girls revealed they were targeted on the basis of their religion. One student we interviewed told us: "This girl was asking... if she could cut my hair, and then she tried to cut my hair ... I ran away." Some students expressed frustration about their perceived inability to do anything about the bullying they faced. According to AD Singh: "At first I felt angry [after being bullied] but being angry doesn't do much... It was mostly pretty annoying that no matter what you did, they wouldn't stop. It went to a point where you basically can't control it." R Kaur shared her frustration with teachers ignoring the problem:

"One time this girl in my class ... she kept calling [my best friend] names and so she almost kind of stepped on his shoulder and got it really bruised up. She does a lot of bad stuff and when you tell the teachers, they don't really do anything about it ... The teachers are just like, "ignore her" and then leave."

Many students and parents believe that education is an effective way to address bullying, and have taken it upon themselves to deliver Sikh awareness presentations at their schools. AE Singh commented on how presenting to his class changed things for him:

"Sometimes, [administrators] ask you to do PowerPoint Presentations. When I was in third grade, I did a small presentation ... about Sikhi and took off my *patka* and showed them that I had long hair ... and it was ok from then. But teachers don't take much action. A small presentation helps a lot. It just helps them understand."

One mother expressed her experience with educating her son's classmates about Sikhs and the *dastaar*.

"I took a video about Sikhism to school and showed it to the whole grade . . . The kids were very curious. I told the teacher from the beginning, from kindergarten, that my son's appearance is different, and kids are curious...[My son] was very conscious about it, he didn't like anybody touching his [*dastaar*]. So I used to tell the teacher in the beginning that he doesn't like anyone touching his *dastaar*, and if you feel that the kids have many questions, I can come here and talk about it, and why we do it, why we have a different appearance, why we respect our hair..."

Another student, S Kaur commented on a program she felt was effective:

"In sixth grade ... they have 12 people from 12 different religions come in and put them in each classroom and students go to each classroom and learn ... That way people learn. That was helpful. And even last year we talked about my religion in history class sometimes. So that helped too."

Despite students' interest in having their fellow classmates educated on Sikhs and Sikh practices, 70% of the students surveyed stated that Sikhism was never discussed in school. AF Singh explained, "[Sikhism] is in the textbook but we never cover it. There's a whole section about it. It's in the history book. But we don't go over that." U Kaur said, "[m]y cousin, in her [text] book, they have maybe one or two pictures of a Sikh guy in there ... but there's maybe just a caption, or a little about it, but that's all."

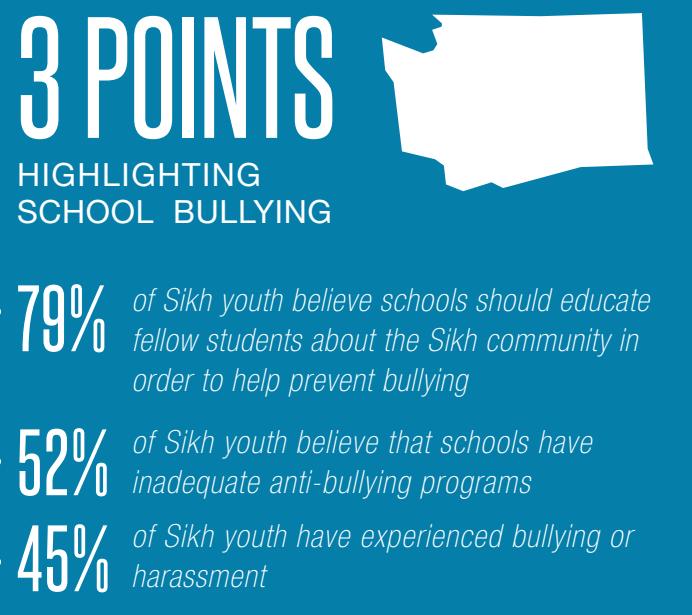
It is clear that Sikh children in Boston face high rates of school bullying, consistent with what we observed in all the cities we visited. While we did not hear many stories of violence against Sikh school children in Boston, Sikh youth there encounter ignorance about their heritage and a perception that Sikhs are associated with terrorism. Like students elsewhere, students in the Boston metropolitan area saw education as an important means of combating bias-based bullying and harassment.



## Seattle, Washington

*"People pull off our patkas [smaller turbans] because they think it's funny . . . and it's part of our religion to cover our heads and I think it's really, really bad . . . they don't understand that there's a religion called Sikhism."*

A Singh



### Background: The Sikh Community in Washington

Sikhs began migrating to the Pacific Northwest, including Washington State, at the turn of the 20th century.<sup>77</sup> The Sikh population of Washington has grown substantially ever since. One Gurdwara (Sikh house of worship) in Renton—near Seattle—estimates the local Sikh population to be around 25,000.<sup>78</sup>

The Sikhs of Washington encountered bigotry early in their history, and many of these challenges have not abated. In 1907, a group of predominantly Sikh laborers in Bellingham, Washington were beaten and driven out of town by a racist mob.<sup>79</sup> Sadly, a century later in 2007, a Sikh taxi driver in Washington was brutally assaulted in a hate crime,<sup>80</sup> and in June 2013, the U.S. Department of Justice secured a hate crime conviction against an assailant who assaulted yet another Sikh taxi driver in the state.<sup>81</sup>

### Community Voices and Data

In June 2012, we conducted surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews at Gurdwara Singh Sabha in Renton, Washington. Over 200 children participated in the focus groups, approximately 150 surveys were completed, and seven individual one-on-one interviews were conducted.

Out of the four states we visited, Washington had the lowest overall rate of bullying at 45.5%, significantly lower than Indianapolis and Fresno, where the rates were 56% and 55% respectively. The students generally talked about greater acceptance of their outward identity in schools, strong anti-bullying programs, and a general commitment among school officials to combat bullying.

Notwithstanding this, bullying remains a problem for an unacceptably large number of Sikh youth. Multiple Sikh students in focus groups revealed that their *dashtars* (Sikh turban) or *patkas* (smaller turban worn by Sikh children) have been pulled off of their heads at school. One of them was taunted by a fellow student and accused of "hiding a bomb" under his turban.

**"OUT OF THE FOUR STATES WE VISITED, WASHINGTON HAD THE LOWEST OVERALL RATE OF BULLYING."**



The negative effects of bias-based bullying can be exacerbated because of parental indifference, parents being too busy with multiple jobs, or apprehension about engaging with school officials due to language barriers. Although parental indifference was more of a concern in Indianapolis, students in Washington highlighted the fact that parents are sometimes ill-equipped to address bullying. For example, B Singh discussed how a young Sikh boy's khanda (Sikh emblem) necklace was ripped from his neck and "all his mom really did was tell him not to let it happen again." B Singh expressed frustration at the mother's response because the young boy was "only 8 years old," and unable to prevent that type of physical assault from reoccurring.

Sometimes parents are left in the dark because their child is too ashamed or hurt to admit that they are being bullied or harassed. One poignant story came from A Kaur's parents, after her school contacted them about their child. The nurse at the school reported that their daughter had been coming into the nurse's office for recess every day for several weeks. After observing this happen repeatedly, the school nurse contacted A Kaur's parents and told them that she did not believe their daughter was ill. Ultimately, A Kaur, who her parents described as very sociable, always exhibiting strength, boisterous, and full of life, became withdrawn, even at home. After trying unsuccessfully

to determine what was happening to her daughter, A Kaur's mother finally discovered that her daughter was being bullied constantly and physically assaulted by a fellow student. It was only after A Kaur confided in her parents that they were able to persuade the school to investigate what was happening, which resulted in A Kaur's teacher catching the bully in the act. The bullying stopped after the school suspended the bully and threatened her with expulsion.

One common pattern we observed from coast to coast among the students we surveyed was a tendency to deflect or minimize the harm they felt. Many Sikh children have become numbed to the consistent verbal and physical assault on their identity (religious or ethnic). While they were very willing to discuss bullying they had seen, only when prompted did many of them reveal their own personal stories.

Relative to other states we visited, Sikh students indicated during interviews that fellow students in the Seattle metropolitan area are more welcoming towards their Sikh identity. Despite this general sense that the Seattle metropolitan area is more welcoming, over half the students we surveyed said that their school did not have an anti-bullying program or that they did not know if an anti-bullying program existed at their school.

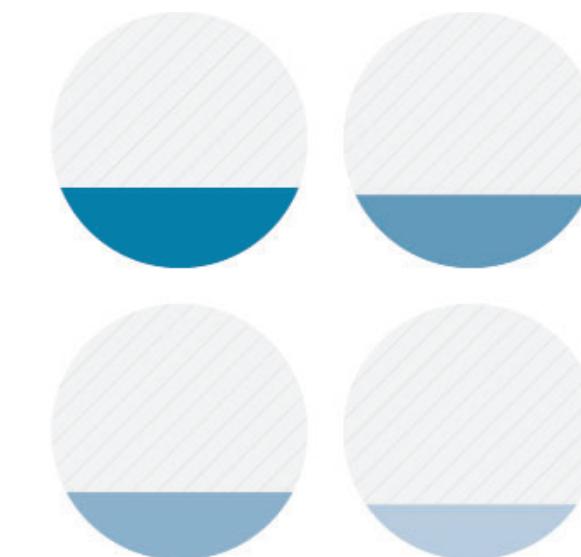
Regardless of whether their schools had anti-bullying programs, the students we surveyed offered many ideas to prevent bullying and promote mutual respect and understanding at their schools. For example, B Kaur proposed that schools devote an entire day to bullying prevention awareness:

*"Be the Change Day" where [schools] have one day dedicated to just anti-bullying, or ... at our school they have like a 'no place for hate'.... where one day... they just talk about bullying; we go through all six periods, all on what bullying is. These sessions are mandatory ... [the students] have to come; it's not a choice. And so I feel like that's one step closer to stopping bullying."*

Another student, E Singh, felt that not enough was being done to talk about diversity in the classroom. He told us:

*"I think just trying to foster a very diverse environment and talking about diversity, rather than trying to hide these things [would be helpful]. We should just come out and be open about it: this is what the stereotypes are, this is why they may be wrong, and let's just talk about it and move on."*

Of the students surveyed in Washington, 87.3% said that Sikhism is not mentioned at all in their classes or school materials, and 79% would like to have Sikh awareness education in their schools. The overwhelming majority of Sikh students we surveyed across the country believe that sharing basic information on Sikhs and Sikh practices in their schools would help reduce bullying.



## DOES YOUR SCHOOL HAVE AN ANTI-BULLYING PROGRAM?

**30%**

*"Anti-Bullying programs exist, I have participated in them."*

**28%**

*"Do not know if my school has an Anti-Bullying program."*

**24%**

*"School does not have an Anti-Bullying program."*

**19%**

*"Anti-Bullying programs exist, but I have not participated in them."*

# METHODOLOGY

During the spring of 2012, the International Center for Advocates Against Discrimination (ICAAD) received a consultancy grant from the Sikh Coalition to document bullying of Sikh children around the country and to draft a report on its findings.

In June 2012, ICAAD and a team of volunteers administered survey questionnaires on school bullying in-person and online to over 500 students; organized school bullying forums for over 700 students at Gurdwaras (Sikh houses of worship) in Fresno, California; Indianapolis, Indiana; Boston, Massachusetts, and Renton, Washington; and conducted one-on-one interviews with over 50 students to gather more detailed, qualitative data on their experience with bullying and harassment.

Surveys and interviews were conducted primarily in Gurdwaras, where the children were gathered for summer camps or public forums on school bullying organized by volunteers supporting this project. All children and their parents were notified beforehand that these gatherings would include discussions of bullying for research purposes.

All children interviewed individually were informed of the purpose of the interview, that parental consent was required, and that any video of their interview could be ultimately used for advocacy. To encourage frank dialogue, the children and their parents were told that the names Singh and Kaur,<sup>82</sup> with a randomly selected first initial, would be used in this report for all children to protect their privacy and maintain confidentiality.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Sikh Coalition would like to first acknowledge the Sikh children and parents of Boston, Fresno, Indianapolis, and Seattle and the surrounding areas whose personal narratives and experience are the basis of this report. This report underscores the fact that young Sikhs in America endure unacceptably high rates of bullying and harassment in our nation's schools. We are humbled and inspired by their strength and more determined than ever to end bullying and harassment in our nation's schools.

## BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS:

Harinder Singh  
Harpreet Singh  
Kaviraj Singh  
Jaspreet Kaur

## INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA:

Maninder Singh  
Walia  
K.P. Singh  
Jagjit Singh

## FRESNO, CALIFORNIA:

Rajdeep Singh  
Mohinder Singh  
Sandhawalia  
Pashaura Singh  
Dhillon  
Harpreet Singh  
Jaswant Singh Bal  
Simran Kaur

## SEATTLE, WASHINGTON:

Jasmit Singh  
Gurdev Singh  
Mann  
Sujot Kaur

We are thankful to the lead researchers of this report, Hansdeep Singh, JD, LLM, Co-Founder and Director of Legal Programs of the International Advocates Against Discrimination (ICAAD), and Jaspreet Singh, JD, Co-Founder and Director of Policy and Advocacy at ICAAD. They led each public forum on school bullying, gathered survey responses, conducted interviews, reviewed and analyzed survey data, and put together the initial draft of this report. We deeply appreciate their dedication to defending human rights.

Members of the Sikh Coalition team: Sapreet Kaur, Executive Director; Amardeep Singh, Program Director; Rajdeep Singh, Director of Law and Policy; Simran Kaur, Advocacy Manager; and Satjeet Kaur, Development & Communications Senior Manager edited or otherwise prepared this report for publication.

Finally, we are grateful to Ik Manzil, a Sikh funder collaborative, and the Open Society Foundations for providing grant support for our school bullying work and this report. We are also grateful for the financial support provided by the Sikh Coalition's generous individual donors. This report would not have been possible without their collective generosity.



<sup>1</sup> The pseudonyms “Singh” and “Kaur” with a randomly selected first initial are used in this report for all children quoted to protect their privacy and maintain confidentiality. It is religiously mandated that Sikh males have the last name Singh (lion or king) and Sikh females have the last name Kaur (lioness or princess) as a means of breaking free from the caste system. In India, caste can most readily be identified by one’s last name.

<sup>2</sup> “Making Our Voices Heard: A Civil Rights Agenda for New York City Sikhs,” The Sikh Coalition, May 2008, available at: <http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/RaisingOurVoicesReport.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> “Bay Area Civil Rights Report 2010,” The Sikh Coalition, November 2010, available at: [http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/Bay\\_Area\\_Civil\\_Rights\\_Agenda.pdf](http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/Bay_Area_Civil_Rights_Agenda.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> “Wal-Mart pulls Osama bin Laden costume after pressure from Sikh community,” Herb Scribner, Deseret News, September 30, 2013, available at: <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865587395/Wal-Mart-pulls-Osama-bin-Laden-costume-after-pressure-from-Sikh-community.html>.

<sup>5</sup> “Texas State Curriculum Now Includes Sikhi,” The Sikh Coalition, May 21, 2010, available at: <http://www.sikhcoalition.org/advisories/2010/texas-state-curriculum-now-includes-sikhi>.

<sup>6</sup> “Six Year Journey Results in Adoption of Curriculum Standard,” The Sikh Coalition, September 25, 2009, available at: <http://www.sikhcoalition.org/stay-informed/sikh-coalition-advisories/74>.

<sup>7</sup> “Throw the Book at National Textbook Manufacturers,” The Sikh Coalition, May 2013, available at: <http://www.sikhcoalition.org/our-programs/education/throw-the-book-at-national-textbook-publishers>.

<sup>8</sup> H.R. 1199: Safe Schools Improvement Act of 2013, introduced, March 13, 2012, available at: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/hr1199>; S. 403, Safe Schools Improvement Act of 2013, introduced, February 28, 2013, available at: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/s403>.

<sup>9</sup> Title VI, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq., available at: <http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/cor/coord/titlevistat.php>.

<sup>10</sup> Title VII, 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000e, et seq., available at: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/chapter-21/subchapter-VI>.

<sup>11</sup> 18 U.S.C. § 249, available at: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/249>.

<sup>12</sup> “Student Victimization in U.S. Schools,” National Center for Education Statistics, 2009, available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012314.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> “Texas State Curriculum Now Includes Sikhi,” The Sikh Coalition, May 21, 2010, available at: <http://www.sikhcoalition.org/advisories/2010/texas-state-curriculum-now-includes-sikhi>.

<sup>14</sup> “Six Year Journey Results in Adoption of Curriculum Standard,” The Sikh Coalition, September 25, 2009, available at: <http://www.sikhcoalition.org/stay-informed/sikh-coalition-advisories/74>.

<sup>15</sup> “Throw the Book at National Textbook Manufacturers,” The Sikh Coalition, May 2013, available at: <http://www.sikhcoalition.org/our-programs/education/throw-the-book-at-national-textbook-publishers>.

<sup>16</sup> “Making Our Voices Heard: A Civil Rights Agenda for New York City Sikhs,” The Sikh Coalition, May 2008, available at: <http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/RaisingOurVoicesReport.pdf>; “Bay Area Civil Rights Report 2010,” The Sikh Coalition, November 2010, available at: [http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/Bay\\_Area\\_Civil\\_Rights\\_Agenda.pdf](http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/Bay_Area_Civil_Rights_Agenda.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> “No Place for Hate,” The Anti-Defamation League, available at: <http://regions.adl.org/new-york/pdfs/nph-ny-resource-guide.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Id.

<sup>19</sup> “Assess Bullying,” U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, available at: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/at-school/assess-bullying/index.html>.

<sup>20</sup> “Sikh Community Over 100 Years in the Pacific Northwest,” Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience, available at: <http://www.wingluke.org/life-in-pacific-northwest>.

<sup>21</sup> “The 1907 Bellingham Riots in Historical Context,” University of Washington, Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, 2008, available at: [http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/bham\\_history.htm](http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/bham_history.htm).

<sup>22</sup> “Timeline Sikh Community in the Pacific Northwest,” Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience, available at: <http://www.wingluke.org/life-in-pacific-northwest>.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. v. Bhagat Singh Thind, 261 U.S. 204 (1923) available at: <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/cgi-bin/getcase.pl?court=us&vol=261&invol=204>.

<sup>24</sup> “Timeline: Sikh Community in the Pacific Northwest,” Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience, available at: <http://www.wingluke.org/life-in-pacific-northwest>.

<sup>25</sup> Id.

<sup>26</sup> Id.

<sup>27</sup> “We Are Not the Enemy: Hate Crimes Against Arabs and Muslims, or Those Perceived to be Arab or Muslim After 9/11,” pg. 10-11, Human Rights Watch, available at: <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/usa1102.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> “Mission and History,” The Sikh Coalition, available at: <http://www.sikhcoalition.org/about-us/mission-a-history>.

<sup>29</sup> “We Are Americans Too: A Comparative Study of the Effects of 9/11 on South Asian Communities,” June Han, Discrimination and National Security Initiative, Pluralism Project, Harvard University, pg. 2-3 (2006), available at: [http://pluralism.org/affiliates/kaur\\_sidhu/We\\_Are\\_Americans\\_Too.pdf](http://pluralism.org/affiliates/kaur_sidhu/We_Are_Americans_Too.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Making Our Voices Heard: A Civil Rights Agenda for New York City Sikhs,” The Sikh Coalition, May 2008, available at: <http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/RaisingOurVoicesReport.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> “Bay Area Civil Rights Report 2010,” The Sikh Coalition, November 2010, available at: [http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/Bay\\_Area\\_Civil\\_Rights\\_Agenda.pdf](http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/Bay_Area_Civil_Rights_Agenda.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> “Timeline: A History of Violence Against Sikhs in the Wake of 9/11,” Nick Carbone, Time, Aug. 6, 2012, available at: <http://newsfeed.time.com/2012/08/06/timeline-a-history-of-violence-against-sikhs-in-the-wake-of-911>.

<sup>33</sup> “Two men enter no-contest pleas in attack on Sikh taxi driver,” Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee, March 7, 2011, available at: <http://blogs.sacbee.com/crime/archives/2011/03/w-sacramento-pd-2.html>.

<sup>34</sup> “MTA employee loses three teeth to hate nut’s sucker punch on A train Memorial Day,” John Lauinger, New York Daily News, Jun 5, 2011, available at: [http://articles.nydailynews.com/2011-06-05/local/29640761\\_1\\_bias-attacks-bias-incident-jiwan-singh](http://articles.nydailynews.com/2011-06-05/local/29640761_1_bias-attacks-bias-incident-jiwan-singh).

<sup>35</sup> “Anti-Muslim bigot beat Sikh cab driver,” Levi Pulkkinen, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Oct. 28, 2012, available at: <http://www.seattlepi.com/local/article/Police-Anti-Muslim-bigot-beat-Sikh-cab-driver-3985421.php>.

<sup>36</sup> “Port Orange Sikh forgives attackers, but wants them brought to justice,” Lyda Longa, Daytona Beach News Journal, Mar. 8, 2013, available at: <http://www.news-journalonline.com/article/20130308/NEWS/303089971>.

<sup>37</sup> “Fresno police chief Jerry Dyer speaks to Sikhs about attack,” Jacob Rayburn, Fresno Bee, May 8, 2013, available at: <http://www.fresnobee.com/2013/05/08/3290627/fresno-police-chief-jerry-dyer.html>.

<sup>38</sup> “Chronicling Anti-Sikh Violence, and Now a Victim”, J. David Goodman, New York Times, Sept. 23, 2013, available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/24/nyregion/chronicling-anti-sikh-violence-and-now-a-victim.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/24/nyregion/chronicling-anti-sikh-violence-and-now-a-victim.html?_r=0).

<sup>39</sup> “Wade Michael Page was steeped in neo-Nazi ‘hate music’ movement,” Joe Heim, Washington Post, Aug. 7, 2012, available at: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/wade-michael-page-was-steeped-in-neo-nazi-hate-music-movement/2012/08/07/b879451e-dfe8-11e1-a19c-fcfa365396c8\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/wade-michael-page-was-steeped-in-neo-nazi-hate-music-movement/2012/08/07/b879451e-dfe8-11e1-a19c-fcfa365396c8_story.html).

<sup>40</sup> “Making Our Voices Heard: A Civil Rights Agenda for New York City Sikhs,” The Sikh Coalition, May 2008, available at: <http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/RaisingOurVoicesReport.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> “Bay Area Civil Rights Report 2010,” The Sikh Coalition, November 2010, available at: [http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/Bay\\_Area\\_Civil\\_Rights\\_Agenda.pdf](http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/Bay_Area_Civil_Rights_Agenda.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> "AutoZone to Pay \$75,000 to Settle EEOC Religious Discrimination Lawsuit," Equal Employment and Opportunity Commission, March 30, 2012, available at: <http://www1.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/release/3-30-12a.cfm>.

<sup>43</sup> "EEOC Sues Tri-County Lexus for Religious Discrimination," Equal Employment and Opportunity Commission, September 28, 2010, available at: <http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/release/11-19-13.cfm>.

<sup>44</sup> "The MTA and Fairness," New York Times, June 3, 2012, available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/04/opinion/the-mta-and-fairness.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/04/opinion/the-mta-and-fairness.html?_r=0).

<sup>45</sup> "Profiling," The Sikh Coalition, available at: <http://www.sikhcoalition.org/our-programs/advocacy/profiling>.

<sup>46</sup> "Bay Area Civil Rights Report 2010," The Sikh Coalition, November 2010, available at: [http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/Bay\\_Area\\_Civil\\_Rights\\_Agenda.pdf](http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/Bay_Area_Civil_Rights_Agenda.pdf); "Making Our Voices Heard: A Civil Rights Agenda for New York City Sikhs," The Sikh Coalition, May 2008, available at: <http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/RaisingOurVoicesReport.pdf>.

<sup>47</sup> "Hatred in the Hallways: A Preliminary Report on Bias Against Sikh Students in New York City's Public Schools," The Sikh Coalition, 2007, available at: [http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/hatred\\_in\\_the\\_hallways.pdf](http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/hatred_in_the_hallways.pdf).

<sup>48</sup> "Bay Area Civil Rights Report 2010," The Sikh Coalition, November 2010, available at: [http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/Bay\\_Area\\_Civil\\_Rights\\_Agenda.pdf](http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/Bay_Area_Civil_Rights_Agenda.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> "A Free Ride for Bullies," Neha Singh and Khin Mai Aung, New York Times, September 23, 2007, available at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/23/opinion/nyregionopinions/23QUsingh.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/23/opinion/nyregionopinions/23QUsingh.html?_r=0).

<sup>50</sup> "Sikh Student Attacked in Queens," ABC News, June 8, 2008, available at: <http://abclocal.go.com/wabc/story?section=news/local&id=6190393>.

<sup>51</sup> "Sikhs Protest Hair Cutting Attack," Stephen Bronner, Queens Courier, July 2, 2008, available at: <http://queenscourier.com/2008/sikhs-protest-hair-cutting-school-attack-14080/>.

<sup>52</sup> "Sikh Boy's Turban Set on Fire at School," Sikh Coalition, May 12, 2008, available at: <http://www.sikhcoalition.org/advisories/2008/sikh-boys-turban-set-on-fire-at-nj-school>.

<sup>53</sup> "Department of Justice Reaches Settlement to Resolve Complaints of Religious Harassment at Charter

School in DeKalb County, Georgia," U.S. Department of Justice, May 7, 2013, available at: <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2013/May/13-crt-516.html>.

<sup>54</sup> "New Rules Are Aimed at Deterring School Bullying," September 3, 2008, New York Times, available at: <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/09/03/new-rules-are-aimed-at-deterring-school-bullying/>.

<sup>55</sup> "Sikh Coalition Testifies at US Civil Rights Commission," The Sikh Coalition, May 17, 2011, available at: <http://www.sikhcoalition.org/advisories/2011/video-sikh-coalition-testifies-at-us-civil-rights-commission>.

<sup>56</sup> "Peer to Peer Violence + Bullying – Examining the Federal Response," United States Commission on Civil Rights, pg. 104, (2011), available at: <http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/2011statutory.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> "Sikhs at White House Conference on Bullying," Anju Kaur, Sikh News Network, March 20, 2011, available at: <http://www.sikhnn.com/headlines/1320/sikhs-white-house-conference-bullying>.

<sup>58</sup> "For Sikh Teens, A Coalition Devoted to Safety and Advocacy," Wall Street Journal, April 10, 2013, available at: <http://blogs.wsj.com/metropolis/2013/04/10/for-sikh-teens-a-coalition-devoted-to-safety-and-advocacy/>.

<sup>59</sup> California State Assembly Concurrent Resolution 97, introduced February 2, 2012, available at: [http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab\\_0051-0100/acr\\_97\\_bill\\_20120202\\_introduced.html](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/asm/ab_0051-0100/acr_97_bill_20120202_introduced.html).

<sup>60</sup> Id.

<sup>61</sup> "Stockton Sikh Temple's 100th Anniversary Noted in Congress," LA Now Blog, Los Angeles Times, November 12, 2012, available at: <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2012/11/congressman-honors-states-longstanding-sikh-community.html>.

<sup>62</sup> "Dalip Singh Saund," Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, available at: <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=s000075>.

<sup>63</sup> California Assembly Bill No. 1964, available at: [http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201120120AB1964](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201120120AB1964).

<sup>64</sup> "Bay Area Civil Rights Report 2010," The Sikh Coalition, November 2010, available at: [http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/Bay\\_Area\\_Civil\\_Rights\\_Agenda.pdf](http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/Bay_Area_Civil_Rights_Agenda.pdf).

<sup>65</sup> "Timeline: A History of Violence Against Sikhs in the

Wake of 9/11," Nick Carbone, Time, Aug. 6, 2012, available at: <http://newsfeed.time.com/2012/08/06/timeline-a-history-of-violence-against-sikhs-in-the-wake-of-911>.

<sup>66</sup> "Two men enter no-contest pleas in attack on Sikh taxi driver," Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee, March 7, 2011, available at: <http://blogs.sacbee.com/crime/archives/2011/03/w-sacramento-pd-2.html>.

<sup>67</sup> "Sikh Man Beaten With Steel Pipe in Fresno Hate Crime," ABC News, May 7, 2013, available at: <http://abclocal.go.com/kfsn/story?section=news/local&id=9094041>.

<sup>68</sup> "Sikhs Wary of San Francisco Airport," Rebecca Rosen Lum, Houston Chronicle, May 18, 2008, available at: <http://www.chron.com/life/houston-belief/article/Sikhs-wary-of-San-Francisco-airport-1583467.php>.

<sup>69</sup> "Bay Area Civil Rights Report 2010," The Sikh Coalition, November 2010, available at: [http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/Bay\\_Area\\_Civil\\_Rights\\_Agenda.pdf](http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/Bay_Area_Civil_Rights_Agenda.pdf).

<sup>70</sup> "Misdirections in Bullying Prevention," Anti-Defamation League, 2005, available at: <http://www.adl.org/combatbullying/Misdirections%20in%20Bullying%20Prevention%20and%20Intervention%20Web.pdf>.

<sup>71</sup> "Interfaith Gathering at Sikh Satsang of Indianapolis," The Pluralism Project, available at: <http://www.pluralism.org/photosets/view/829>.

<sup>72</sup> "Gov. Daniels visits Sikh temple for milestone celebration," Francesca Jarosz, Indianapolis Star, October 20, 2008, available at: <http://www.indystar.com/article/20081020/LOCAL/810200343/Gov-Daniels-visits-Sikh-temple-milestone-celebration>.

<sup>73</sup> "XLVI Faces: KP Singh, Community Outreach," XLVI-Faces, December, 27, 2011, available at: [http://youtu.be/lmN\\_lE5mmaQ](http://youtu.be/lmN_lE5mmaQ).

<sup>74</sup> "Sikh sues shuttle operator that wouldn't hire him," Bruce Smith, Indianapolis Star, December 3, 2009, available at: <http://www.indystar.com/article/20091203/LOCAL0402/912030441/Sikh-sues-shuttle-operator-wouldn-t-hire-him>.

<sup>75</sup> "Teja Singh, Sant: Religious Teacher and Preacher," AllAbout Sikhs, available at: <http://www.allaboutsikhs.com/1900/teja-singh-sant>.

<sup>76</sup> "AutoZone to Pay \$75,000 to Settle EEOC Religious

Discrimination Lawsuit," Equal Employment and Opportunity Commission, March 30, 2012, available at: <http://www1.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/release/3-30-12a.cfm>.

<sup>77</sup> "Sikh Community Exhibition," Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience, available at: <http://www.wingluke.org/sikh-community-exhibition>.

<sup>78</sup> "Gurudwara Singh Sabha of Washington, Renton," available at: <http://www.gssrenton.com/>. Statistics on Sikh populations are inherently problematic because U.S. Census Bureau does not count or code by religion.

<sup>79</sup> "The 1907 Bellingham Riots in Historical Context," University of Washington, Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, 2008, available at: [http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/bham\\_history.htm](http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/bham_history.htm).

<sup>80</sup> "Meet the opposite of a terrorist," Robert Jamieson, Seattle Post Intelligencer, April 21, 2008, available at: <http://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Meet-the-opposite-of-a-terrorist-1271017.php>.

<sup>81</sup> "Washington State Man Pleads Guilty to Federal Hate Crime in Attack on Sikh Man," Press Release, United States Justice Department, June 27, 2013, available at: <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2013/June/13-crt-732.html>.

<sup>82</sup> It is religiously mandated that Sikh males use the surname Singh (lion or king) and Sikh females use the surname Kaur (lioness or princess). Historically, the significance of assigning these surnames to Sikhs was to reject the caste system, as caste in India can be readily ascertained through one's surname.

